

# ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

TO THE

Okehampton District Council,

ACTING AS

The Rural Sanitary Authority.

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*To the Okehampton District Council*  
*acting as*  
*The Rural Sanitary Authority.*  
*Annual Report of Medical Officer of Health,*  
*1895.*

GENTLEMEN,

The close of another year renders it incumbent on me to present you with an Annual Report dealing with the general sanitary conditions of the year, with its incidence of mortality and sickness, the measures taken for the prevention of disease with remarks on the future improvements in the district under your control.

Area of District—114,556 acres. Population, (1891)—14,381.

**Vital Statistics.**

In dealing with the vital statistics of the year I shall assume that our present population approximates to that of the census of 1891.

*Births*—369 births were registered during the year—195 males and 174 females—giving a rate of 25.6 per 1,000. This rate is higher than last year when it was 23.2 per 1,000.

Natural increase of population during the year was 121 as compared with 107 in the previous year. This excess however is probably more than compensated for by the exodus of young adults to the towns and larger centres of industry.

*Deaths*—248 deaths—131 males and 117 females—were registered in the year, giving a rate of 17.2 per 1,000. The corresponding rate last year was 15.8 per 1,000, so it will be seen there is a slight increase. It is satisfactory to note, though, that this increase can be mainly accounted for by an excess of deaths in persons over 65 years of age. It would seem that the severe cold of last winter was particularly trying to persons of advanced age.

Appended is the table giving the birth and death rates of the registration sub-districts.

Sub. Districts.	BIRTHS.					DEATHS.				
	Populat'n 1891.	Males.	Females.	Total.	Rate per 1,000.	Populat'n 1891.	Males.	Females.	Total.	Rate per 1,000.
Bratton Clovelly	1749	28	21	49	28.0	1749	13	15	28	16.0
Chagford ...	2621	40	37	77	29.3	2621	21	26	47	17.9
Hatherleigh ...	3233	38	39	77	23.8	3233	22	19	41	12.6
North Tawton...	3783	50	45	95	25.1	3783	48	29	77	20.3
Okehampton ...	2995	39	32	71	23.7	2995	27	28	55	18.3



From this table it will be seen that the highest birth rate occurred in the Chagford sub-district. Last year Hatherleigh had the highest birth rate.

The highest death rate occurred in the North Tawton sub-district. Hatherleigh has the lowest rate—a position which it has maintained for the last three years.

*Ages at Death*—37 deaths occurred in infants under one year of age giving a rate per 1,000 births of 100. Last year the rate was 101.1 per 1,000.

Over 65 years of age there were 109 deaths, in other words, over 43 p.c. of the total number of deaths occurred in persons over 65.

In Chagford and Hatherleigh more than 50 per cent of the deaths were in persons over 65, whereas in Bratton Clovelly less than 20 per cent were over that age.

The highest infantile death rate was in the Okehampton sub-district and the lowest in the Hatherleigh and North Tawton.

### Causes of Death.

*Zymotic Disease*—20 deaths were due to the Chief Zymotic Disease, giving a rate of 1.3 per 1,000. This is the same number as last year. The following is the list.

Diphtheria	3	Measles	7
Enteric Fever	4	Whooping Cough	1
Erysipelas	1	Infantile Diarrhoea	4

As was the case last year Okehampton had the highest death rate from these diseases. Chagford and Hatherleigh had the lowest.

It will be noticed that there were no deaths from Scarlet fever during the year; and that, corresponding with the increase of Enteric fever there was also an increase of Infantile Diarrhoea.

*Influenza* caused 7 deaths—4 of these in the Hatherleigh sub-district. This is a diminution of the returns for the past few years.

*Heart Disease*—35 deaths, mainly in persons over 60 years of age. This is a large increase on the numbers for the past few years, but probably is of no sanitary importance. I have, in speaking of the general death rate, pointed out the large proportion of deaths in persons over 65 years of age—consequently there is a proportionate increase in deaths from Senile Heart failure.

*Bronchitis*—Broncho-Pneumonia and Pleurisy caused 40 deaths, 16 under 5 years of age.

This number is about the same as in the preceding two years Bratton Clovelly was lowest in the list and Chagford highest.

*Pulmonary Phthisis*—11 deaths were due to this disease—a great reduction on the numbers in the two previous years. Bratton Clovelly, as usual, has the largest number, Okehampton and Chagford stand lowest.

*Cancer*—14 deaths were due to cancer, as compared with 9 last year. During the last three years cancer has shown a very large increase.

*Child-birth*—caused one death in the Okehampton sub-district

Injuries, the result of accident, caused 8 deaths, in addition one death was suicidal.

No deaths were attributed to Rheumatic fever, so the increase of this disease in 1894, on which I commented, has not been maintained.

For the detailed list of fatal diseases in the various districts see Table A at end of report.

### Infectious Disease of the Year.

Only 38 cases of Infectious disease were notified during the year as against 167 last year, when there was a marked prevalence of Scarlet fever in one portion of the District.

This year the Scarlet fever incidence has been practically nil, but there has been an increase in Enteric fever and Diphtheria.

The following list gives the cases of notified diseases and the parishes affected.

	Scarlet Fever.	Diphtheria.	Enteric Fever.	Erysipelas
Beaworthy ...	0	3	0	0
Bratton Clovelly ...	0	3	0	0
Drewsteignton ...	1	0	1	0
Exbourne ...	1	1	0	0
Germansweek ...	4	0	0	0
Hatherleigh ...	2	0	0	3
Iddesleigh ...	3	0	0	0
Inwardleigh ...	0	0	0	1
North Tawton ...	0	0	7	1
Okehampton ...	0	2	0	0
Sampford Courtenay ...	0	2	0	0
Sourton ...	0	1	0	0
South Tawton ...	0	0	2	0
Totals ...	11	12	10	5

It will be noted in the above list that Small-pox which occurred in the returns of the two previous years, is absent.

*Scarlet fever*—The few cases of this disease occurred chiefly in an isolated form on the very borders of the district, and were generally found to be due to infections from places outside. Judging from the amount of Scarlet fever that has existed in the district during the past three or four years, I think we may expect a period of immunity until fresh susceptible subjects develop.



*Measles*—In the early part of the year this disease prevailed widely in the western and central portions of your district. The schools at North Lew, Bridestowe and Sampford Courtenay were closed, but as a practical point one finds school closure for this disease to be of very little, if any benefit. Theoretically it should prove beneficial, as in many of the schools in the district the children live away from each other and are mainly brought into contact during school hours. As a rule, however, the disease only comes under notice when it has already caused considerable falling off of the attendance at school, too late from a sanitary point of view to be of service. The long period of incubation of the disease, its comparative mildness (apart from complications), and the absence of medical aid militate strongly against our endeavours to check the ravages of Measles. Its case mortality per cent may be small, but the wideness of its spread renders it a disease which enters largely into the death roll of the British Isles.

*Diphtheria*—One or two outbreaks of this disease caused some little anxiety at the time.

At the end of March two cases were notified at a cottage near Sampford Courtenay Village. The child first attacked had recently recovered from Measles. On enquiry, two or three cases of mild sore throat had previously occurred in the neighbouring Village of Sampford Courtenay, but there was nothing pointing to these cases as being of an infectious character. On examining the sanitary surroundings of the infected cottage it was found that the slop water was disposed of by pouring it into a rough surface channel just outside the back door, where it stagnated and decomposed.

Both cases of the disease terminated fatally, and the house was disinfected.

Shortly afterwards a mild case of the disease occurred in the adjoining parish of Exbourne, and was probably derived from the infected cottage at Sampford Courtenay, by indirect means. The patient recovered, and the house was disinfected, and there was no further spread.

Early in July five cases of Diphtheria were simultaneously notified as occurring in three separate houses in Bratton Clovelly and Beaworthy, and a few days later two other cases were reported in the same neighbourhood. The cases were widely separated, but all the children first affected had attended school at Bratton Clovelly, so it was clear that we must look there for the spread of the disease, if not its origin. The infected children had not sat close together in School, and it was noted that the disease showed a greater incidence amongst those who came from a distance than those from the Village, in fact only one child from the Village was taken ill. It was further found that all of the children first affected had drunk water from the old pump, which was known to be

impure. The evidence certainly led one to suspect some casual relationship between the impure water and the disease, although I am aware that the best authorities on the subject of Diphtheria outbreaks deny that the disease is brought about by impure water. The School was promptly closed and disinfected, the pump locked up, and general measures carried out, with the result that the disease did not spread beyond one fresh house far from the seat of the outbreak. Only one case terminated fatally.

*Enteric Fever*—Two isolated and apparently unconnected cases occurred in South Tawton parish in the summer and autumn, and at the end of the year a solitary case cropped up in the parish of Drewsteignton. In none of these cases could the disease be traced to a previous one, and there was no spread.

By far the most serious outbreak of the year occurred in North Tawton. On September 9th, three cases of the disease were notified at one house, and at the same time another case from the same house went to his home outside the district, developing the disease on his arrival, and subsequently dying from it.

No exposure to infection could be traced, although it was diligently sought for, nor was there any suspicion attached to the food supply. The water for domestic purposes was obtained from the main, and although the supply pipe for the house was uncovered and examined the result was negative.

Some seven or eight days before the onset of the disease, a pit which received blood and washings from the slaughter house had been cleaned out, after being allowed to putrefy for some days, through want of time due to harvest work. Popular opinion attributed the out-break of the disease to this source, but there is another supposition which fits in better with our present knowledge of the disease. Cases of Enteric Fever have been cropping up in close proximity to the house now under consideration for the past year or two, and personally I think it the more probable that the cases this year were associated in some way with the cases of previous years, whether by means of a contaminated sub-soil or other way I cannot say.

A fortnight after the first out-break three other cases occurred, and another a few weeks later. In addition, one of the trained nurses in charge of the patients developed the disease very soon after leaving the house. I think there can be no doubt from the interval of time between the attacks, that the latter part of the out-break was due entirely to infection from the earlier cases, and not from the cause of the first cases still acting.

Fortunately the disease did not spread outside the one house.

Whether one believes that Enteric Fever always arises from a previous case, or accepts the *de novo* origin from decomposing animal organic matter, the practical issue is the same. It is to keep all



decomposing matters (whatever their origin) from contaminating the water, air, and the soil contiguous to dwelling houses.

*Influenza*.—This disease was not very prevalent during the year, although it still appears in the death returns.

*Infantile Diarrhæa* was more prevalent than it has been for some years past, doubtless being associated with the drought and heat of the summer. It is well known that this complaint is most prevalent with a high temperature, at which the organisms of decomposition flourish most luxuriantly.

### Public Work.

NORTH TAWTON.—During the year a large portion of this town has been re-sewered in accordance with the plans passed by the Local Government Board in 1893. I believe the work has been done in a satisfactory manner.

It is hoped that this place will also be supplied with an increased water supply very shortly. Measures are being taken towards this necessary work.

BRATTON CLOVELEY.—This Village was supplied with a proper water supply early in the year. The source is placed well above the Village and the water is gravitated to the stand pipes. For the first few weeks complaints were freely made as to the “tarry” taste from the composition used for coating the mains, but no complaints have been heard for some months now. The water is very pure chemically, and must be a satisfactory improvement after the old well water in the Village, especially after the revelations of last year.

BELSTONE.—Work is progressing favourably as regards the new water supply of this popular Village. The reservoir is about completed and the mains laid, so that before many weeks have passed the Village should be well supplied with pure water in abundance.

HATHERLEIGH.—The water supply for this town has been completed and services pipes are being laid. The water is obtained from the Hall meadow Spring, and unfortunately has to be pumped to the reservoir above the town, a novel plan in our District, where gravitation is the force generally found available. One will watch the progress of events with interest. The capability of the oil-engine to do its work, whether liable to breakdowns, the expense of working, etc. Of course it is too early yet to form an opinion on these points, but judging from reports of similar water supplies in other districts, the result is very favourable.

Many of the house connections are being made with block tin pipes, as the inhabitants have much fear of lead poisoning, a fear I believe to be quite unfounded as regards the Hatherleigh water.

During the Summer complaints were made as to the bad smells arising from the new sewers in Hatherleigh. With the new water supply and consequent better flushing I hope this evil will cease. With regard to the sewage outfall, it must be remembered that regular attention must be given to the proper distribution of sewage, the frequent removal of deposited solids, etc.

BRIDESTOWE.—The water supply of this Village is being dealt with by the inhabitants at their own risk. By obtaining an additional supply of water and enlarging their reservoir they hope to provide a sufficiency of water for Village requirements. From the reservoir a main is being carried down to the Village, and stand-pipes are to be fixed,

It is hoped that their endeavours will be crowned with success, as the alternative schemes would be much more costly. Judging from past results of trial to increase the supply from the present sources the outlook is not very hopeful. An abundance of water in rainy months has hitherto dwindled down to a very scanty supply in the summer.

CHAGFORD —The valves in the water mains have been attended to. This town appears to be well supplied with drinking water of a pure character.

## Summary of Work for the Year.

### INSPECTOR'S DEPARTMENT.

#### *Mr. Hooper's Report.*

Complaints received	...	...	...	22
Notices issued	...	...	...	43
Visits to Lodging-houses	...	...	...	6
Visits to Bakehouses	...	...	...	9
Visits to Slaughter-houses	...	...	...	13
Houses supplied with water	...	...	...	33
New wells sunk	...	...	...	4
Old wells cleaned out	...	...	...	7
Houses lime washed...	...	...	...	5
House drains repaired	...	...	...	14
House drains laid and connected	...	...	...	35
New W.C.'s provided	...	...	...	19
W.C.'s repaired	...	...	...	11
Earth closets provided	...	...	...	9
Animals removed	...	...	...	5
Manure removed	...	...	...	4
Overcrowding abated	...	...	...	1
General nuisances	...	...	...	17
Certificates for new houses	...	...	...	8



*Mr. Knapman's Report.*

Notices to drain houses into sewers	...	...	18
Notices to lime wash houses	...	...	10
Notices to provide closet accommodation		...	35
Notices to abate nuisances	...	...	69

In the early part of the year alteration was made as regards the Sanitary Inspector's work. A second Inspector, Mr. E. H. Knapman, was appointed. In addition to their Sanitary work they were also appointed Surveyors of Roads. This arrangement has much to recommend it, and I hope will prove satisfactory in practice.

*Housing of the Working Classes*—Two houses have been condemned as unfit for habitation, both were closed.

*Water Analysis*—Several samples of water analysed during the year, and where necessary, reported on at your monthly meetings. In one instance the water supply of a farm house was found to contain an appreciable quantity of zinc. A new water supply had been provided at some distance from the farm and the water conveyed into the house by a galvanised pipe. Directions were given that water must not be used that has stood for any time in the pipe, and I suggested that the matter should be held over for a few months when the water should be again examined two or three times. As a rule an insoluble zinc compound is formed which coats the pipe and prevents any further action of the water on the metal.

Early in the year a new well was sunk at the Sportsman's Arms Inwardleigh, as a substitute for the old well which yielded contaminated water. The new well provided water of no better quality. Evidently the soil just round the house was so filth saturated that a pure water was not easily found close to the house, so the landlord is having water conveyed by gravitation from a distance.

During the year an arrangement was come to with the Okehampton Town Council for allowing houses in your district, which were just outside the bounds of the Borough, to be connected with the Okehampton sewers. This agreement should prove advantageous for both parties, and it is hoped that matters will be pushed forward without any undue delay.

I believe the Town Council is awaiting the sanction of the Local Government Board to the arrangement. Sec. 28 Public Health Act, '75 states that their sanction is necessary, although I believe the work could have been proceeded with under Sec 22 of the Act, as only one or two owners of property are concerned.



*Bye-laws*—A new set of bye-laws are being framed. The old bye-laws only related to the larger places in the district, and it was very properly thought that they should be extended and remodelled.

*Slaughter Houses and Bake Houses*—Most of these have been visited during the year. Some are invariably well kept and of good construction, whereas others are old fashioned and not kept so clean as they ought to be.

*Lodging Houses*—Only one of these now exists in the district, as far as I am aware. It is situated at Hatherleigh, and on inspection it is found to be invariably clean and tidy.

Ramsley, in South Tawton parish, is still without a proper water supply. I hope the matter will be no longer delayed. I should be pleased to meet the Parish Council with view of facilitating the work.

*Refuse Removal*—There is much room for improvement in this respect. The people require educating to a higher level as regards the value of fresh air. In vain are the pure Dartmoor breezes if they are poisoned by organic emanations as they enter the dwelling house.

Appended are the usual tables showing the incidence of diseases and deaths in the sub-registration districts.

I remain, Gentleman,

Your obedient Servant,

EDWARD H. YOUNG, M.D., D.P.H.,

*Medical Officer of Health.*

Okehampton, January 23rd, 1896.

Table of DEATHS during the Year 1895, in the Okehampton Rural Sanitary District,  
classified according to Diseases, Ages, and Localities.

Registration Sub Districts.	MORTALITY FROM ALL CAUSES, AT SUBJOINED AGES.							MORTALITY FROM SUBJOINED CAUSES, DISTINGUISHING DEATHS OF CHILDREN UNDER FIVE YEARS OF AGE.													
	At all ages	Under 1 year.	1 and under 5.	5 and under 15.	15 and under 25.	25 and under 65.	65 and upwards.		Diphtheria	Enteric or Typhoid Fever.	Erysipelas	Measles.	Whooping Cough.	Diarrhoea & Dysentery.	Phthisis.	Bronchitis, Pneumonia & Pleurisy.	Heart Disease.	Injuries.	All other Diseases.	Total.	
BRATON CLOVELLY	28	4	3	2	1	13	5	Under 5 5 upwds	1	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	3	7
CHAGFORD.....	47	6	2	2	1	12	24	Under 5 5 upwds	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	4	8
HATHERLEIGH .....	41	6	2	1	1	9	22	Under 5 5 upwds	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	3	—	—	—	4	8
NORTH TAWTON .....	77	11	6	6	2	17	35	Under 5 5 upwds	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	6	—	—	2	7	17
OKEHAMPTON .....	55	10	5	1	3	13	23	Under 5 5 upwds	—	—	1	3	—	3	—	3	—	—	—	5	15
Totals.....	248	37	18	12	8	64	109	Under 5 5 upwds	2	—	1	5	1	4	1	16	—	—	2	23	55
									1	4		2			10	24	35	7	110	193	

Table of POPULATION, BIRTHS, and of NEW CASES OF INFECTIOUS SICKNESS coming to the knowledge of the Medical Officer of Health, during the year 1895, in the Okehampton Rural Sanitary District; classified according to Diseases, Ages and Localities.

Registration Sub Districts.	POPULATION AT ALL AGES.		Registered Births.	Aged under 5 or over 5.	NEW CASES OF SICKNESS IN EACH LOCALITY COMING TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.			
	Census 1891	Estimated to middle of 1895.			Scarlatina	Diphth'ria	Enteric or Typhoid Fever.	Erysipelas
BRATTON CLOVELLY	1749	1749	49	Under 5 5 upwds	2 2	3 3	— —	— —
CHAGFORD .....	2621	2621	77	Under 5 5 upwds	— 1	— —	— 1	— —
HATHERLEIGH.....	3233	3233	77	Under 5 5 upwds	— 6	— —	— —	— 4
NORTH TAWTON.....	3783	3783	95	Under 5 5 upwds	— —	1 2	— 7	— 1
OKEHAMPTON .....	2995	2995	71	Under 5 5 upwds	— —	1 2	— 2	— —
Totals.....	14381	14381	369	Under 5 5 upwds	2 9	5 7	— 10	— 5





